

10
MEMORIAL SERMON

OF THE LATE

HON. JOHN McMURRICH

DELIVERED IN

KNOX CHURCH,

BY THE

REV. W. M. PARSONS, PASTOR,

ON

SUNDAY, MARCH 4th, 1883.

Toronto :

GLOBE PRINTING COMPANY, KING STREET EAST.

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The Memorial Sermon of the late HON. JOHN McMURRICH was preached on Sunday morning, the 4th of March, by Rev. H. M. Parsons, in Knox Church.

There was a large audience present, almost every seat in the building being occupied.

SERMON.

TEXT : 2 TIMOTHY, iv. 8.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day ; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

A Christian man is a divine man. He has in him two natures, the human and the divine. By the mystical and mysterious union in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, he is a partaker of the divine nature. The words selected to guide our meditations were uttered by one who in conscientious ignorance had persecuted the Lord upon whom he was then gazing by faith. When Stephen, the proto-martyr, beneath the cruel blows of his murderers, looked into the open heaven, and saw the Son of God in His glory, the outer garments of the men who stoned him were laid at the feet of "a young man whose name was Saul." That same young man we now find in the evening of life, prematurely aged, sitting chained in the dense darkness of a Roman dungeon, and uplifted by the inspired hope he here describes. No hope of escape from the unjust doom awaiting him on earth could arise in his breast. Calmly he waits, expecting every moment to hear the footfall of the messenger sent to execute the bloody behest of the tyrant Nero. What are his thoughts? We are not left in doubt. "I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand." These words are significant. Paul had laid himself on the altar, and was now being poured out as a libation before God. He was ready to loose the cable;

the time to set sail for another country had come. No thought, no fear of death—for him death was overcome, and forever abolished.

The word in the original is not from *kataluo*—to dissolve, to die, dissolution, but from *analuo*—to loosen from the shore, to set sail, departure for a better land! The man who was saying this had said, in the full consciousness of his sinful nature, "Sinners, of whom I am chief;" and by the grace of God the same man said, "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but *Christ* liveth in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." There is no vain boasting in this triumphant pæan. No pride of intellect or of heart prompted this calm and confident assurance of the apostle. With unfeigned humility this testimony to redeeming grace was given. Looking through the gloom of his prison-house, he saw the *bright light* which dawned upon him as he journeyed to Damascus. And in the same faith and hope, a great multitude since have looked into the opening heavens, and in the same spirit testified, "I have finished my course;" "I have died my death in the crucified One;" "Christ in me is the hope of glory."

God has been of late emphatically reminding us of the transitory nature of this present life. Many great names of earth have been blotted from the current roll of the world. The ravage of death among the noble and learned of Church and State, as well as among the lowly, has been relentless and startling. Within the month three of the older members of this church have been summoned from earth, to share, as we trust, with the great apostle this immortal and illustrious hope. No more fitting theme need be sought for the instruction of those who survive, and for the comfort of the bereaved, than the truth plainly set forth in this closing note of a victorious life.

THE SURE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

While briefly alluding to the *life* and *hope* of the great apostle, I shall aim to sketch those features which, while in some degree manifest in every Christian life, will yet have special and fitting illustration in the character of that most humble and also most eminent Christian, the late senior member of the session of this church.

The rewards which are promised to the faithful are ever based on character, and are designed to stimulate and encourage us, while in this present state, to build and complete that character by the pattern given in our illustrious Head.

I. Examine for a little *the life* Paul led in the flesh. He tells us it was "by faith of the Son of God." It was founded wholly upon *grace*: upon what Christ had done *for* him, and upon what He had done *in* him. The finished work of our Lord is outside of us; and when that is applied within us by the Spirit of God, and received by faith, then the sinner becomes a member "of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." It is, so to speak, taking his sacrificial offering as it issued in resurrection, and setting a part of that risen life into the dead stock of a sinner's nature, and then causing it to grow forever. This is what Paul means when he says, "The life I now live I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave Himself for me." The substitution of the Redeemer in his place was to him an evident and personal fact, upon which he always stood, resting with firm assurance, confident in expectant hope, therefore always equipped for the battle of life.

Again, it was a life of *victory in conflict*. At no time in the inspired account of his career do you find Paul saying, "I am beyond all conflict, I am above temptation, I commit no sin." Quite the opposite of this is constantly recorded as his experience. He exempts no moment, when he says, "I have fought a good fight." That fight began when he

enlisted under the great Captain of our salvation, and lasted through his whole life. "I have kept the faith" was his dying cry. He had made the most masterly defence of the faith given to the saints, and it was against pressing and malignant foes. Reviewing the scenes of his stormy history, he could add, "I have finished my course," because he had passed through the measured distance of time, and now was calmly expecting the crown, as the meed of victory in the constant conflict. In accord with these facts, examine the seventh chapter of Romans. Read the account of his missionary trips; the treatment he experienced on every hand; his conflicts with Satan and invisible foes. It was a hand to hand contest for supremacy every step of the way, and by grace he was victorious in the struggle all the way to glory.

Perish the thought, if any one of you think there is an easy way to final salvation—if any one thinks he can pass through the enemy's land and not be assaulted—if any think they can take the hand of Jesus and hold it, and be held by it, and still strike hands with the *world*, the enemy of God and of their own souls.

The *life* we are observing was a life of incessant toil and care of the churches.

Separated by the Holy Spirit to carry the gospel to the heathen, he went boldly forward to encounter obstacles and dangers, unknown and unseen. He might have preferred to stay among his own, and redeem his character in Jerusalem, where he had been noted for hostility to Christians, and the injury he inflicted on the Church. But no; not conferring with flesh and blood, he enters on the work, and braves the elements in his zeal to fulfil the entrusted mission. Rejected by the Jews—cast out, stoned, and left for dead, he revives, and turns to the Gentiles, proclaims the gospel of love, and plants churches in all the large cities of the world. And then the care and charge of these churches,

teaching them and building them up in the knowledge of the gospel. The Epistles fully illustrate this thought. His care for their ministry led him, under the Spirit, to train Timothy and Titus for the work. In these writings he covers the whole ground of Christian service.

But *again, his life reveals* the divine hope by which he was constantly sustained and comforted. We hear him say, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown." "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead." "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." At another time he exhorts us to be "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." In the vision held before his admiring gaze by the Saviour's own hand, we can almost see the prisoner, still held by his chain, in the joy of liberty reaching with outstretched hands for the crown; so strong was the *hope* by which his life had been sped forward, from the time he first heard the voice of his risen Lord to this moment of departure to be with Him.

II.—Consider now the *hope* Paul cherished.

It was *personal*, not *vague and general*. Not a hope that sometime he would be raised up from the grave, and that meantime heaven would be all he desired. He had distinctly before his mind and his heart the *crown* of righteousness held out by the righteous judge, before whose judgment seat he, with all saints who have loved His appearing, shall appear to receive their rewards. With true humility he also says, "for me." He believed his Lord. This definite object incited his course, and so operated upon his human nature, that he was the most devoted and consecrated man of history. With what vividness this object held his gaze! Looking for no emoluments of earth, no fame of learning, or wealth, or position, but looking into the face of his risen Lord, the King of glory, he ever ran the race, pressing

forward for the prize that God has promised, in the up-calling of His saints at the resurrection.

In considering this hope we must not overlook the character of this crown. The crown of *righteousness* must have an appropriate relation as a reward to the work the Apostle had done. His heroic zeal in the maintenance of that great truth, for which afterward Luther stood so valiantly, is displayed in the Epistle to the Romans. There he affirms and establishes the *righteousness* of God, revealed in Christ alone, and received by faith alone. So clearly and cogently is this argued, that no one accepting the word of God as the Divine Revelation can attempt to substitute any work of his own, or insert even a thought of his own, as a plea for acceptance with God. We have other instances of this relation of reward to service. Thus James speaks of victory over temptation: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord shall give him." And the Apostle Peter, when speaking of the fidelity of elders, whom God has placed over the flock, says: "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." We cannot doubt that this triple crown will surmount the brow of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, when the Lord shall come for His saints. But the masterly exposition and defence of the righteousness which is by faith, as contrasted to and opposed to righteousness by law, undoubtedly gives the form of this inspired expression. The crown also is peculiarly significant in the word used. It is not the *diadema*, the crown of royalty, but *stephanos*, the crown of laurel, placed on the brow of the conqueror in the games, or the winner of the race. And so our Apostle places before us the crown his Saviour held before him. Not for him only, but for all who are with patience running the Christian race, "looking unto Jesus," and "looking for Him."

"Our Captain leads us on,
He beckons from the skies,
And reaches out a starry crown,
And bids us take the prize.

"Be faithful unto death.
Partake my victory,
And thou shalt wear the glorious wreath,
And thou shalt reign with Me."

Again, this hope is connected with a certain date. "The righteous judge shall give me at *that day*." He did not expect this crown at death; he looked forward to *the day*. It is the day of which our Lord spoke in his argument with the Sadducees, when He said, "they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain *the* *age* and the *resurrection from among the dead*," the day to which He referred when He said, "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just"—and the resurrection of the just is at the coming of the Lord—"they that are Christ's at His coming." That our Lord does come on *that day* is most certain from His word, but the *date* is unknown, and therefore He has bid us "watch" for it.

"That day" had been imminent to the Apostle through his toiling life; it was imminent in the dungeon; it is imminent to him now by the side of his glorified Master. The promise and the hope gave him zeal, and courage, and patience throughout the earthly journey; it has been equally a motive and an incentive in the heavenly state. It was near to the prisoner, who with the eye of faith pierced through the walls around him, and in the full liberty of Christ gazed on the glory revealed. It is *nearer* now, as he basks in the sunlight of heaven.

The persons to receive this crown are not omitted in the comforting hope given to our faith. The blessed hope is not confined to the Apostle nor to the martyrs of the early Christian churches, but is to be given "to all them also that love His appearing." It is in the perfect tense, "that have

loved His epiphany." It is quite wonderful that so little attention has been paid to this fact, so often emphasized, that the great hope of the church is the return of her Lord to receive her unto Himself. "And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

The principles set forth in this *life* and this *hope*, as they enter into and form that Christian character, which God will reward, wholly and freely of His grace, find full confirmation and illustration in the life of our beloved friend, and brother, and father, whom we miss from our assembly to-day, and for whose removal we have great sorrow.

By the mercy of God he was spared to us beyond the allotted limit of life, and, till within a few months, in unusual vigor and strength to the fourscore years. His sickness was attended with great clearness and peace of mind, and the glory of the Gospel found most wonderful manifestation through his patient endurance and joyful victory to the end. Could the mute lips of that wasted form, the temple of the Holy Ghost, which paused for a little at this wonted altar of prayer, on its way to the sepulchre, speak but once again, they would forbid me to say a word of that life which he lived among you for more than forty years. But if the glory of God shall be magnified by what divine grace has done in this life, no one more gladly than he would suffer that to be said, which thus might prove of help and comfort to others. The great truth which won the *crown of righteousness* for the apostle was the *one* on which all the hopes of our dear friend were founded. In my earliest visits to him, after his sickness began, he said, "All my trust is in and on the finished work of my Redeemer." Many times during the last few months did he repeat this testimony, with such satisfied contentment, such glowing delight, as to communicate something of his own great joy and

comfort to all who watched and witnessed his gentle departure to glory. As we review his *life*, so rich in grace, so full of benevolence, so loyal to his Master, we first remark *his great humility*. No one can recall any self-exaltation in him. He shrank from notoriety. He was a true witness for his Lord. He loved to commune with Him, and to manifest unconsciously the results of such daily communion. He loved to speak for Him, and his voice, whenever the opportunity occurred, would always be heard on the side of truth and righteousness. His life was filled with those silent testimonies, often more effective upon the onlookers of the world than the most brilliant and fascinating eloquence.

He was *famed for honest dealing* in all the relations of business, as well as of religion. And his honesty arose from personal faith in his personal Lord. He could not brook at any time, or in any person, duplicity, cunning, or subterfuge. On occasion he could and did rebuke the unworthy and insolent conduct, even of those in authority, with Christian dignity and with tremendous force. His fidelity to the civic trusts laid upon him in former years was such, that he was honored by his fellow citizens in many ways, and never found wanting in true and loyal service to the full extent of his strength.

He took great interest in the thorough organization of the schools of the city; and in those institutions of charity for which our city is justly celebrated, he not only felt the deepest sympathy, but was an able and firm supporter, with his wisdom and his means. His name will always be honorably associated with the growth and history of the Home for Incurables, in the western suburb of the city. With the late pastor of this church he labored diligently to establish its foundations and to secure its future success. The last two years, with the greatest energy, he applied himself to the work of completing plans that will prove the

greatest blessing to the unfortunate sufferers who seek its shelter. He ceased his personal exertions for that noble charity only to retire from all earthly scenes and rest from his labors.

His life *was full of thought and care* for the churches. He was a willing and efficient co-laborer with my honored and lamented predecessor, the late Rev. Dr. Topp, in all the combined efforts so happily culminated in the union of the various branches of the Presbyterian Church in this Dominion. At the time when so many conflicting interests were to be harmonized, there was great need of calm and fair judgment, wise and firm counsels, cordial and conciliatory sympathy. These qualities of mind and heart, possessed in an eminent degree by this good man, fitted him to be an instrument, with others of like character, moved by the Spirit of God, to cement a union which every year justifies as most providential and beneficial to the best interests of religion. Every Session of General Assembly since the Churches united in one organization has been favored with his venerable presence; and no layman has wielded a greater influence in the sessions and decisions of that court. He had the broadest views of the service of God, and of means for the promulgation of truth. They commanded respect and attention, because all who knew and heard him felt that he was moved in all he said and did by the supreme desire for the glory of God. He was deeply interested in the cause of college education for the ministry, feeling the vast and increasing call the Church is making for pastors and teachers competent to lead them in the work of evangelizing the world. His hand laid the foundation stone of Knox College; in its prosperity he always delighted, and among his last acts of beneficence assisted in the endowment to perpetuate and secure to the Church its advantages and facilities for ministerial education. Though at times his judgment of plans might differ from dear friends of the

cause, he never swerved in his devoted loyalty to all schemes and plans for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, through the efforts of the church in which he had been trained, and to which so much of his life was given. He was deeply interested in the cause of Sabbath Schools. Forty years since he was a superintendent in this church. He was the chief mover in establishing a Sabbath School at the west end of the city, which afterwards was committed to his son, and now is seen in the flourishing West Presbyterian Church.

His sympathies were not confined within one sect. In the Sabbath School cause at large, the Bible cause, the Tract cause, his name, and work, and means were associated with the wise and good of other churches. He labored actively in these later years with the Young Men's Christian Association, in their laudable efforts to reach the masses outside of Christian privileges. In a wonderful way he delighted to advance every object which, in his view, would promote the influence and the spread of the knowledge of God's word and the purification of the Church. His life was so full of aptitude for good works, he was so in sympathy with every measure, and abreast of every movement that promised good to the world, that I do not make too wide a statement when I say, in view of the character and the works of our departed friend for the last twenty years, he has been the foremost layman in the Presbyterian Churches of Canada. His life was devoted to the interests of Knox Church. His presence in this assembly was so constant that his absence created instant inquiries. Always punctually present, and a most able counsellor in the meetings of Session and the Deacons' Court. A firm and sympathizing friend of the poor and afflicted. Ready and willing to advance the best interests of the congregation in every measure that he could with conscience support. Especially present, deeply interested, and bearing his part with great edification, in the prayer

meetings of the church; and this he did increasingly to the end of his earthly strength. The source of all these varied activities, these warm and loving sympathies, extending over so large a period, and to the extreme limit of life, will be found in the devotion and delight our revered brother had in his habitual and thorough search of the word of God. With increasing diligence during the last few years he devoted himself to it, and came to realize in some good degree the power of that blessed hope which sustained the great apostle.

He to the last spoke of this church with tender interest, rejoicing in its prosperity, and in the readiness of its members to undertake service, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

During the last few weeks, while his life work was rounded out and finished by his good confession, he simply awaited the messenger the Master would send for him. Looking into the open door of heaven, he testified the full sufficiency of the sure foundation, the blessedness of the assured *hope*, that departing he would be with his Lord, and that soon He would come again in glory. Said he at one interview, "I rest in this hope." Under this truth in the Spirit he rapidly ripened for glory. "Looking unto Jesus, and looking for Him," he patiently waited for the chariot to come. He had finished his course: he had striven the strife: he had kept the faith.

"Servant of God, well done,
Rest from thy loved employ,
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter thy Master's joy."

Henceforth before him is this *crown of righteousness*. "Not to me only," said *Paul the aged*, but to all them that have loved His epiphany. Our dear brother embraced this hope fully. He looked into the heavenly places with serene and humble delight, his work all done, ready to depart and

rest with that vast company of apostles, prophets, martyrs and saints of the age, who wait at the right hand of God, before Him who, crowned with many crowns, is seated on the throne, "henceforth expecting till His enemies be made his footstool."

While thanking God for such a long, laborious, beautiful and finished life, as His grace alone perfected, let us remember: "God buries His workers, but carries on His work." Upon whom shall the mantle of our ascended Elijah rest? Who will fill the place made vacant? Who will take up the work that is left? Who will enter the list with the same devotedness, under the same Divine direction, and go forward to the victory that is sure to him who fights in the name of the Master?

"He being dead, yet speaketh." Yes, to his bereaved family. What a legacy! What a perpetual benediction to them, to see the angel of God so gently lead him, their devoted husband and father, down the steep descent of life, through the narrow gate, to the throne of God and the Lamb! I repeat, a *perpetual benediction!* For his prayers have been heard and recorded, and they shall be answered to the glory of God, in His protecting grace to the farthest generation.

"He being dead, yet speaketh" to the office-bearers of this congregation. We are admonished, dear brethren, that "time is short," and we should be incited by this shining example to increasing diligence in the Master's service. I cannot speak of my personal loss in his departure. I have known him for the short time of our acquaintance more intimately than many friends of longer duration. His counsels, and encouragement, and almost fatherly care, have been a great support and delight in my ministry among you. His tender, loving sympathy with all in trouble, sorrow and bereavement, are well remembered by many before me, whose hearts still throb with grief. They are well known

and prized in my experience of the past year, and never shall I forget the largeness and thoughtfulness of his love.

"He being dead, yet speaketh," and his voice may be heard by every one who will listen. What word does he proclaim to us? What would he say, if now we could hear him speak from the skies? No new theme would be heard from those lips, so often opened in praise in this house and in the meetings for worship. He would still sing in fervent accents:

"Saviour, more than life to me,
I am clinging close to Thee;
Let Thy precious blood applied,
Keep me ever near Thy side."

And as the *hope* seemed to dawn on him in the weary moments of waiting, and he was heard in the night watches chanting,

"I am coming, I am coming,
Coming, Lord, to Thee for rest,"

So we believe he is resting yonder, "till that day," when the *same crown*, held before the admiring gaze of the martyr apostle, shall be placed upon his head, and not alone upon him, but "also on all them that have loved the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"'Tis but a little while,
And He shall come again,
Who died that we might live, who lives
That we with Him may reign."



